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Consular access for 303 Indian flyers in France

India on Saturday said it was working with the French government for an early resolution of the situation after a Nicaragua-bound flight carrying 303 Indians was detained by French authorities during a technical halt at an airport near Paris over suspected human trafficking. The Indian embassy said it is working with the French government for the welfare of the Indians.

Suspected drone strike on ship with 21 Indian sailors off Gujarat coast

Incident linked to rising attacks on vessels by Iran-backed Houthis amid Israel-Hamas war

YESHI SELI & MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

FOUR days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the rising maritime threats as a result of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, a suspected drone strike caused an explosion aboard a Mangaluru-bound merchant ship with around 21 Indian crew about 200 nautical miles off the coast of Gujarat's Veraval.

The ship had set sail from Saudi Arabia, carrying crude oil, and was heading towards Mangaluru. It was sailing under the flag of Liberia.

The attack was first reported by the British watchdog, United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO). "UKMTO has received a report of an attack by unmanned aerial system (UAS) on a vessel causing an explosion and fire. Fire was extinguished and no casualties were reported. Vessels are advised to transit with caution and report any suspicious activity," UKMTO said in a statement.

The incident comes in the wake of Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen stepping up attacks on vessels in the Red Sea. The US has since initiated a multilateral coalition to provide protection to cargo ships in the Red Sea.

Saturday's attack is viewed as having links to the Red Sea attacks. Though the distance between Red Sea and Veraval is 3,315 km, reports suggest the attackers could have taken this ship to have an Israeli connect, even though the ship was carrying the flag of Liberia.

"This appears to be a spillover of the Red Sea conflict. The Indian crew members narrowly escaped. It is a major cause of concern," a source said.

Reacting swiftly, the Indian Coast Guard Ship Vikram, which was on patrol duty in the Arabian Sea was dispatched to the site to provide assistance.

A P-8I maritime patrol aircraft was also deployed.

"The situation will be assessed and relevant steps will be taken. As per the initial information, it is suspected to be a drone-based attack," a source said.

No crew members have been injured in the incident, which led to a fire on board. The attacked vessel is being towed away to Mumbai, where it is expected to reach on Monday.

INCREASE IN MARITIME THREATS, SAYS IFC-IOR

The Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), a maritime security centre hosted by the Indian Navy said there has been an increase in maritime security threats over the past one week. Houthis have pledged to continue attacks till Israel stops its war in Gaza

CONG SHAKE-UP

Priyanka off UP, gen secy Pilot to steer Chhattisgarh

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

IN a major organisational shake-up ahead of the 2024 general elections, the Congress on Saturday appointed Sachin Pilot as the general secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh and Avinash Pande as the general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, replacing Kumari Selja and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, respectively. According to a statement issued by the party, Priyanka Gandhi will now be a general secretary "without any assigned portfolio".

Priyanka Gandhi

Sachin Pilot

Senior leaders K C Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Mukul Wasnik, and Randeep Singh Surjewala remain general secretaries in-charge of organisation, communication, Gujarat and Karnataka, respectively.

Pilot, a former deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, replaces Kumari Selja, who has now been given the charge as general secretary in-charge of Uttarakhand. The party's move to assign a key role to Pilot is seen as an effort to placate the leader, who has been engaged in a turf war with former chief minister Ashok Gehlot. In 2020, Pilot led a coup, almost toppling the Gehlot government. Though the party managed a temporary truce between the two leaders during the recent elections, it did not strike a chord with the electorate.

Congress leader G A Mir has been made the general secretary in-charge of Jharkhand with additional charge of West Bengal. Deepa Dasmunshi has been appointed the general secretary of Kerala and Lakshadweep with additional charge of Telangana. Dasmunshi replaces Tariq Anwar in Kerala.

Jitendra Singh, who is the general secretary in charge of Assam, has been given additional charge of Madhya Pradesh. Deepak Babaria, who is in-charge of Delhi, will have additional charge of Haryana. Syed Naseer Hussain will continue as in-charge of the Congress President's office and Pranav Jha as AICC secretary in-charge of communication of the Congress Chief's office.

EXPRESS READ

Three held for moral policing in M'luru

Mangaluru: In an incident of moral policing, three men have been arrested for harassing a man and his female friend in Mangaluru on Thursday. P5

Traffic on Mysuru, Hosur roads hit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

BENGALURU-MYSURU road, Bangalore International Airport road and Hosur road witnessed traffic jams for hours on Saturday with people leaving the city for native places and popular tourist spots in view of Christmas and year-end holidays. CONTINUED ON: P5

Flip-flop: CM says no decision yet on hijab ban

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah, who declared on Friday that he had directed officials to lift the ban on wearing hijab in educational institutions, did a U-turn on Saturday stating that no such decision has been taken.

His statement at Kavalande village in Mysuru district, where he inaugurated a police station, drew widespread criticism.

BJP leaders, including former CMs BS Yediyurappa and Basavaraj Bommai, and senior leader Basangouda Patil Yatnal came down heavily on Siddaramaiah soon after his statement.

Many Congress leaders too criticised Siddaramaiah stating that it was wrong to make such a statement which would affect the party's winning prospects in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Siddaramaiah refused to speak on the hijab issue during his visit to Mysuru on Saturday. However, when reporters pressed him for his response, he opened up stating that the matter is still at the discussion stage.

The CM said, "We have not revoked the ban yet, I had to reply when somebody in the audience raised the issue during the function at Kavalande village on Friday. We are thinking about lifting the ban. We will discuss it at the government level before taking a final decision." P5

Sri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Govt. of Karnataka

KARNATAKA STATE
ROAD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Sri D K Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Govt. of Karnataka

Road Safety Campaign

- Do not drive carelessly
- Do not let your driving hinder other drivers.
- Do not overtake unnecessarily
- Do not perform stunts on public road
- Wear helmet while riding two wheelers
- Wear seatbelt while driving four wheelers
- Do not use mobile and earphone while driving

An average of 109 crashes and 32 fatalities are occurring in Karnataka every day. That means about 4 to 5 crashes and one death every hour.

#(2022, https://ksp.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/road Accident_Report_2022.pdf)

'YOUR SPEEDING CAN COST A FAMILY ITS FUTURE FOREVER'
This photo shows the family of a road crash victim K. N. Purushottama of Tumakuru. He was hit by a speeding driver in Bengaluru while on his way to a job interview on a motorcycle. The crash ruined his family

Shri Ramalinga Reddy,
Hon'ble Minister for
Transport & Muzrai
receives grievances from
the public.

DRIVE SLOWLY
Follow Speed Limit While Driving

Strive for Road Accident Free State

As enshrined in our Constitution, - to safeguard public property and to abjure violence is the fundamental duty of every citizen of India.

Dr. N.V. Prasad I.A.S., Secretary, Transport Department
A.M. Yogeesh I.A.S., Commissioner for Transport & Road Safety
J. Purushotham, Additional Commissioner & Member Secretary, Karnataka State Road Safety Authority